



DCFS Response to COVID-19 *Frequently Asked Questions*

What is DCFS Doing in Response to COVID-19?

DCFS leadership is working closely with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and health officials to address Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19 concerns. We recognize that this is a challenging time for the community and that many are fearful or anxious. DCFS is working to ensure the safety of our staff and the families we serve through a variety of measures and will continue in its child protection work and provide essential services to children and families.

DCFS is currently following its Emergency Operations Plan at level red. This indicates an increased need for resources and allows the Department to respond to this crisis while maintaining minimum operations. Under the Emergency Operations Plan, DCFS is temporarily postponing in-person meetings, trainings, gatherings, and special events to the extent possible.

Additionally, DCFS has restricted travel out of state for all Department staff and are coordinating out-of-state home visits with other jurisdictions. In consultation with County and State officials, DCFS is also temporarily suspending some policies that do not impact critical child safety work.

Can I still visit a DCFS office during this time?

Kathryn Barger, Chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has ordered all Los Angeles County facilities closed to the public effective immediately. DCFS offices will remain open and accessible to employees only during this time. If parents, youth, or caregivers have questions, they should first contact their social worker or the main line of the DCFS Regional Office they are trying to reach.

Can I still have visitations with my child/parents/siblings?

During the state of emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, all court ordered in-person visits between parents/legal guardians, children, siblings, and anyone else should continue; however, social workers are to determine the manner of visitation to promote and maintain family bonds. Decisions about the way in which visitation is to occur shall be considered on a case-by-case basis, balancing the public health directives and the best interest of the child.

Family visits are to take place: In-person, remotely by using videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc) or by telephone calls. During this stressful time, we encourage liberal use of virtual visits and phone calls, with a reminder that visits are for children of ALL ages and parents of babies are entitled to virtual visits as well. Contact your social worker if you have questions about your visitation plan.



Will a DCFS social worker still visit my home during this time?

DCFS social workers will continue to complete in-person visits when responding to child abuse referrals to assess for child safety. Social workers will complete a pre-screening before starting the in-person visit and proceed accordingly for the protection of all engaged in the visit.

The Administration for Children and Families (federal government) and the California Department of Social Services is permitting monthly social worker visits for children already receiving services from DCFS to be accomplished through videoconferencing. Based on the circumstances of the case, visits can be in-person or through videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp). If someone in your home is feeling ill or has flu-like symptoms, please contact your social worker. Social workers will complete a pre-screening by telephone or in-person before starting the in-person visit.

Am I still entitled to my rights as a foster youth during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Despite the current public health situation, you still are entitled to your rights as a foster youth including access to medical care; right to contact family members, your county social worker, attorney, CASA or other advocate; and right to education and social contacts. Read more about Foster Youth Rights at <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/youth/know-your-rights/>.

Do I need to attend my upcoming Dependency Court hearing?

Effective March 20, 2020, the Dependency Courts will open for the limited purpose of hearing or handling essential or emergency matters, this includes Detention Hearings, restraining orders, and emergencies concerning needs of children. Contact your attorney to confirm if you are required to attend your next court hearing and if you have any questions. Visit the www.lacourt.org for latest updates.

How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

Below are simple precautions to stay safe and healthy during this time:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water after interacting with a child or family member or after touching surfaces in a family's home;
 - Teach children to sing a song while scrubbing hands with soap for 20 seconds - like the ABC or Happy Birthday songs.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth, and ears with unwashed hands;



- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks;
- Practice "social distancing" by limiting the time you spend in public. Avoid large groups of people and try to maintain distance from others when you do go out.

How do I keep children engaged at home while school is out?

DCFS is working with local school districts and community partners to help accommodate caregiver needs or connect you with additional resources for the children in your care.

We understand that staying home with children for the next several weeks while practicing social distancing may be tough. We have assembled a list of community-based resources available:

- The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) opened “grab-and-go” food centers for school families. Beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020, each child can take home two nutritious meals. Centers will be open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. To find the center nearest you: [click here](#). Check your local school district for additional resources.
- The Los Angeles County Library provides various digital resources you can access 24/7, no matter where you are. With a library card number and PIN - you can access:
 - Read [eBooks](#) and listen to [audiobooks](#) on OverDrive or Libby.
 - Stream [movies and TV shows](#) on Kanopy and Hoopla.
 - Check out [digital magazines](#) via RBDigital.
 - Stream [music](#) on Freegal.
 - [TumbleBook Library](#) is an online collection of animated and talking picture books.
 - [Brainfuse](#) provides kids and learners of all ages with one-on-one homework help and tutoring from 1:00 – 10:00 p.m. every day.
- Sign up for [ReadyRosie](#) to get texts or emails with ideas for family engagement tips and early learning opportunities.
- Educational content will stream on the [PBS SoCal](#) and [KCET](#) websites, on the free KCET app – available on Roku and Apple TV – and on the PBS Video app, also available on Roku, Apple TV as well as Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Google Play and YouTube.
- Sign up for a [weekly newsletter](#) from PBS Kids with ideas for activities and tips you can use to help children play and learn at home.



What if I think my foster child has COVID-19?

For mild illness, there is currently no specific treatment for COVID-19. Most children will get better with rest and home care, so there is no need to see a doctor. Children should remain at home until at least 72 hours after symptoms have resolved without the use of medications for fever or cough and it has been at least seven (7) days since symptoms first appeared. If you still have questions and want to consult with a medical professional, call the LAC+USC Medical Hub COVID-19 warm-line available 24/7 at (323) 409-3090 (for foster youth, DCFS workers, resource families and providers).

If your child has difficulty breathing, cannot keep fluids down, or appears very sick, call your medical provider or call 911.

Will DCFS still host resource parent trainings during this time?

DCFS has postponed all in-person trainings for resource parents and caregivers. For more information, please call your social worker, the Resource Family Approval (RFA) warm line at (877) 323-7165 or visit <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/>.

I am a Non-Minor Dependent youth and my college campus is closed. Can DCFS help me?

If you are a Non-Minor Dependent youth enrolled in college and in-person classes were cancelled or moved online, you may be eligible for free high-speed data hotspots, headsets, and laptops from iFoster. For more information, call iFoster at (855) 936-7837 or by email at phone@iFoster.org.

If you have housing needs due to campus disruptions, such as dorm closures, please contact your social worker and/or Independent Living Coordinator for additional support.

How can I receive updated information?

DCFS has increased the frequency of communications with staff, parents, youth, caregivers, and service providers to provide timely information. Although information is evolving quickly, DCFS continues to monitor developments and will share updates as they become available on the [DCFS website](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) accounts. Please check these channels regularly for updates.

#